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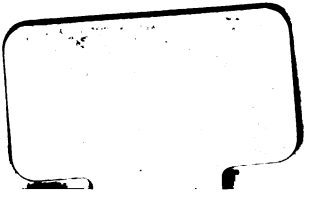
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HEART-BREATHINGS

AGNES M'NEILE MALDEN

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HEART-BREATHINGS

Short Comments

ON

A PORTION OF PSALM CXIX

BY

AGNES M'NEILE MALDEN



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PREFACE.

REQUESTED to prepare the following pages for the press, as one who had known the writer of them almost from her infancy until her death, I have found the task of doing so to be abundantly its own reward. No doubt the fact that I had thus known her has for me added force and interest to the short comments which make up this small volume; and it will increase the reader's profit and pleasure in the perusal of them if I trace, in few words, some points in the life and character of their author.

Mary Agnes M'Neile Malden was born on the 9th February, 1834. The child of parents remarkable for the simplicity of their Christian faith, she enjoyed from infancy the advantages and privileges of a truly Christian home. She was named after her godfather, the late venerable Hugh M'Neile, at the time of her birth Rector of Albury, in Surrey, where her father had lived,

Lieut. Malden, R.N.—afterwards for many years a well-known resident at Brighton.

It was at Brighton I first knew her in her early childhood, and from that time, until her death in 1866, enjoyed more or less frequently the opportunity of witnessing the quiet and even course of cheerful godliness by which she was enabled to adorn the doctrine of God her Saviour. Her health was always uncertain and delicate. Verses addressed to her on her ninth birthday were a true history of her life up to that time :—

Dear child of many a prayer !
Frail nursling of fond love ;
How oft 'mid fear and care
Thy name hath risen above.

Still was the prayer preferred—
Health for thy wasting frame ;
And still the prayer was heard,
And the healing angel came.

Nine years later, in 1852, she was spending the winter under sheltering downs at Bonchurch, in the Isle of Wight ; and through her remaining years, until she died at Brighton, at the age of thirty-one, her life was more or less a struggle with the disease to which finally she succumbed.

During all these years, in the forced retirement of sickness, her Christian character was ripening.

A marked feature in her character was her healthy tone of feeling, her cheerfulness and joyfulness even in her hours of greatest weakness and suffering. The secret of the happy equanimity which was her prevailing characteristic lay in the habit of constant meditation and prayer. Truly it might be said of Agnes Malden that her "delight" was "in the law of the Lord," and that "in His law" did she "meditate day and night." The "fruit" was visible here to those who knew her well; but only the Great Day will declare the extent of the blessing which followed her secret work of intercession for those for whom, as Epaphras for his brethren at Colosse (Col. iv. 12), she was "always labouring fervently in prayers," that they might "stand perfect and complete in all the will of God."

Some tangible fruits of her love and sympathy are known to many. Her little work, "The Invalid's Text Book, or Gathered Crumbs of Hours of Weakness," has passed through four editions, and has been much prized. To the

last edition a few extracts from the manuscript which forms the following little volume were appended.

The whole manuscript, itself left incomplete, is now published in the hope that, as the fruit of much prayer and loving meditation, it may, with God's blessing, be useful to the same ends.

H. D.

PSALM CXIX.

1. *Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord.*

The *character* described in this verse is of those who are "undefiled (margin, perfect or sincere) in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord."

Their *condition*, "Blessed."

"If therefore thine eye be *single* thy whole body shall be full of light."—Matth. vi. 22.

"The path of the *just* is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."—Prov. iv. 18.

"Then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord."—Hosea vi. 3.

"No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly."—Ps. lxxxiv. 11.

These are some of the many encouragements to those who with sincerity of desire, and hearty purpose, "walk in the law of the Lord."

Their blessedness is more fully stated by

David.—Ps. i. 3. Contrast this with the state of the ungodly, vv. 4–6, and with the "way of transgressors."—Prov. xiii. 15.

June 25, 1864.

2. *Blessed are they that keep His testimonies, and that seek Him with the whole heart.*

It was the Lord's complaint of His people: "Judah hath not turned unto Me with her *whole heart.*"—Jer. iii. 10.

And again in Hosea x. 2, "Their heart is *divided.*"

Is not this too often the case with the believer, and the clue therefore to many of the Lord's dealings with him? By sickness, trial, and disappointment he must be taught again and again the lesson that the Lord alone is to be the Portion of His people, and "blessed" indeed is he, if taught by any means to seek the Lord with the "whole heart;" for His promise is, "then shall ye find Me:" and what is it to find the Lord, but to find all the soul needs? for "He" it is who "*satisfieth* the longing soul, and *filleth* the hungry soul with goodness."—Ps. cvii. 9.

Seek like Caleb to "follow" the Lord "fully."—Numb. xiv. 24.

June

3. *They also do no iniquity: they walk in His ways.*

"The undefiled in the way," who "walk in the law of the Lord," who "keep His testimonies," and that "seek Him with the whole heart," are those who being made "free from sin" are become "the servants of righteousness." They can say with St. Paul, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me."—Gal. ii. 20. Of such St. John writes: "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God."—1 Joh. ii. 9. "They also do no iniquity, they walk in His ways."

To walk denotes progress. "As ye have therefore *received* Christ Jesus the Lord so *walk* ye in Him."—Col. ii. 6.

The ungodly man walks in his own way, "according to the course of this world," "fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind."

Contrast the two walks—Matth. vii. 13, 14—the "strait gate" and the "wide"; the "broad" road and the "narrow"; the one ending in "life," the other in "destruction."

June 27.

4. *Thou hast commanded us to keep Thy precepts diligently.*

"An idle soul shall suffer hunger." "But the diligent soul shall be made fat."

June 28.

5. *O that my ways were directed to keep Thy statutes.*

The Psalmist no doubt felt (as every child of God must feel) how far short he fell of keeping the precepts "diligently," and so was the prayer awakened in his heart—"O that my ways were directed to keep Thy statutes." It is a prayer to which the heart of every believer must respond; and very precious become the assurances that our ways shall be directed amidst all the hindrances that beset us. "I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way that thou shalt go; I will guide thee with Mine eye."—Ps. xxxii. 5. "He shall direct thy paths."—Prov. iii. 3. See, too, Phil. i. 6.

But we must not be surprised if the answer comes in a very different manner to that we expect. Thus, we pray this prayer with real longing of heart for a closer walk with God, and instead of the increasing light, and love, and joy we hoped and expected, our way is directed into

most painful and humbling discoveries of the exceeding evil of our own hearts, till we feel, "Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up."—Ps. xl. 12.

But if this result in more true self-loathing, and closer clinging to Christ, we shall feel we have been led by the "right way." By His providential dealings, too, God directs our way to keep His statutes, by leading us in the path of trial and discipline, that He may more and more wean us from the world.

June 29.

6. *Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect unto all Thy commandments.*"

Does not this verse carry us in thought beyond this world to that time, when with "robes washed in the blood of the Lamb" we shall stand among that number who are "*without fault* before the throne of God?" Though the Christian's constant prayer is—"Make me to go in the path of Thy commandments, for therein do I delight," yet is he ever conscious of the sin and defilement that mingles with his best services; and often does he look forward to that time when he shall be able to serve the Lord perfectly.

"Yes, we shall serve Him *then!* and not as now
In weakness, sorrow, worst of all in sin:
Our hearts with perfect, heavenly love shall glow,
And spotless we shall be without, within."

"I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness."—Ps. xvii. 15.

June 30.

7. *I will praise Thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned Thy righteous judgments.*

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out."—Rom. xi. 33.

"Thy judgments are a great deep." To praise God in the day of prosperity with an "unfeigned" heart is a comparatively easy task, but to praise Him in the time of His judgments is a higher step in the Christian life; and it is only by degrees the believer is taught to feel—"I *know*, O Lord, that Thy judgments are right, and that Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me." The more we rest by simple faith on the assurance—"He doeth all things well," the less we shall be perplexed by any of God's dealings, however mysterious they may often seem. The more we *trust*, the more occasions

we shall have for praise, and even now we may begin to learn that song which one day we shall sing perfectly—"Alleluia: Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power unto the Lord our God: For true and righteous are His judgments."—Rev. xix. 1, 2.

July 1.

8. *I will keep Thy statutes: O forsake me not utterly.*

Those who live in the constant sunshine of a Southern land are much more quickly sensible of the clouds and mists of a more uncongenial climate than they are whose home it is. And so is it with the believer: the closer he lives to God, the more direct the rays that shine upon him from the Sun of Righteousness, the more he fears any thought of being forsaken. Thus, while he resolves—"I *will* keep Thy statutes," conscious of his weakness he immediately adds—"O forsake me not utterly." Very precious becomes the promise—"I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." The more so, if we recollect the price the blessing cost. That His people might not be forsaken *utterly*, the Saviour was content Himself to bear the hidings of His Father's face, and cried, in His hour of bitter

agony—"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

Will not the thought of such love quicken us the more to "keep His statutes?"

July 2.

9. *Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Thy word.*

Are we willing thus to "rule" ourselves? to bring every thought, word, and action to the light of God's word? It is a searching test. "For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."—Heb. iv. 12. It must be by contact with the living Word in the written Word that we can be cleansed, either from the guilt or power of sin. The disclosures made in the heart that is laid bare by the "two-edged sword" will be often most painful and humbling; but He who thus searches the heart will speak the comforting assurance to every believing soul—"Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you."—Joh. xv. 8.

July 3.

10. *With my whole heart have I sought Thee: O let me not wander from Thy commandments.*

How completely the word *wander* expresses the believer's continual departure from God! It is not the deliberate wilful act of sin of the ungodly man, but through negligence or worldliness his love often grows cool, and he finds again and again that he has "gone astray like a lost sheep." Very sad and weary would he grow at his continual proneness to wander, did he not rejoice in the protecting, tender love of the Good Shepherd, whose office it is to "bring again that which was driven away," to "seek that which was lost." While therefore he prays, "O let me not wander," he sings, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He *restoreth* my soul, he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake."—Ps. xxiii. 1–3.

July 4.

11. *Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee.*

The "word" hidden in the heart is a preventive against sin! The secret in this verse is worth knowing. Darkness vanishes before light, and so does sin before the word: they cannot dwell together in the heart: as one increases, the other

will decrease. Therefore seek, not so much to empty the heart of what is evil, as to pour in what is good. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you *richly* in all wisdom." "Be *filled* with the Spirit." The more deeply, too, the word is hidden in our hearts, the more quickly we shall be able to answer the assaults of the evil one with—"*It is written.*" Encouragement—"Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."—Jas. iv. 7.

July 9.

12. *Blessed art Thou, O Lord: teach me Thy statutes.*

Who was more deeply taught in the law of the Lord than David, and yet who oftener prayed "Teach me?" Six times in this one Psalm is this petition repeated, "Teach me Thy statutes." Learn from this its importance, and pray for David's earnest desire to be taught. Then shall we find that "the statutes of the Lord are *right, rejoicing the heart.*"

July 10.

13. *With my lips have I declared all the judgments of Thy mouth.*

"With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made

unto salvation."—Rom. x. 10. David was no silent witness for the Lord; he was ever ready "to make known His wonders," "to show forth His praises," "to talk of His doings." Is this so with us? Or is not *silence* too often one of the Christian's sins? David spoke out of "the abundance of his heart," and so must it be with us; the more our hearts are filled, the more ready will our lips be to speak. "Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply thine heart unto my knowledge. For it is a pleasant thing if thou *keep them within thee*, they shall withal be *fitted in thy lips*."—Prov. xxii. 17, 18.

July 11.

14. *I have rejoiced in the way of Thy testimonies as much as in all riches.*

The joy expressed in this verse is the joy of one who feels himself the possessor of great wealth. Do we know anything of it? The benefit of Christian joy is twofold; it increases our own appreciation of the blessings we enjoy, and it recommends them to others. David spoke, in the 2nd verse of this Psalm, of the blessedness of those who kept the testimonies; he now proves that it was his own experience.

In no way are we more likely to win others to Christ than by letting them see the joy there is to be found in "the way" of God's "testimonies." David as king was the possessor of great riches, but he esteemed the law of the Lord "more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold." He knew the relative value of earthly and spiritual riches, the one transient and unsatisfying, the other always satisfying and ever accumulating.

July 13.

15. *I will meditate in Thy precepts, and have respect unto Thy ways.*

It will be well for us to remember the close connection there is between *meditation* "in the precepts of the Lord," and "*respect* unto His ways." For how many of our falls and shortcomings, and how much of our neglect of His ways, may be accounted for by thoughtlessness! Had we known we should have acted differently, but our ignorance arose from want of thought, and thus the result. What pains and careful thought a man takes in prospect of a long journey to see his way clearly, and to avoid all mistakes! Let us be equally careful in the journey of life, and we shall find that the more we "meditate"

in the precepts, the more clearly will God's ways be made plain to our eyes, and the more careful shall we be to "respect" them, and to acknowledge that "the ways of the Lord are right."

July 14.

16. *I will delight myself in Thy statutes: I will not forget Thy word.*

Many do right from a fear to do wrong, but such know nothing of the "delight" David expresses in this verse. A sense of duty alone can never produce it: it can only spring from love. "If ye love Me," says the Saviour, "keep My commandments." How willing are the hands, and feet, and every faculty of soul and body, in the service of those we love! We count no commandment too great, and no duty too slight, for cheerful obedience. So let it be in our Lord's service; and the more the strong power of His love is brought to bear upon our hearts, the more shall we find increasing delight in His "statutes;" besides realising the promise, "Delight thyself also in the Lord, and He shall give Thee the desires of thine heart."—Ps. xxxvii. 7.

July 16.

17. *Deal bountifully with Thy servant, that I may live and keep Thy word.*

If we went oftener to the throne of grace with large expectations we should come away with much fewer disappointments. Satan's aim is to keep us satisfied with as small a measure of grace as possible, and the soul he cannot keep altogether from Christ he will do his best to starve. But let us not fear: He who creates in our hearts the desire to "live," and "keep His word," and inclines us to pray, "Deal bountifully," *is* "able to do exceeding abundantly, above all that we ask or think." His promise is, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it:" and again, "Prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."—Mal. iii. 10. He who prays in faith, "deal bountifully," will soon add, "I will singunto the Lord, because He hath dealt bountifully with me."—Ps. xiii. 6.

July 18.

18. *Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law.*

"The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto

him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Hence the need of the prayer, "Open Thou mine eyes." The Bible is a book of wonders: wonders which neither time nor eternity will be able to exhaust. Some are at once apparent to the eye that has been enlightened by the Spirit; others lie deeper down below the surface, and we need again and again to "anoint our eyes with eye-salve" that we may see. As blind Bartimæus, in reply to our Lord's question, "What wilt thou have Me to do?" answered, "Lord, that I may receive my sight," so, the more deeply conscious we are of our blindness, the more fervent will be our prayer, "Open Thou *mine* eyes." How keenly sensitive is the organ of sight, blindness being often caused by some apparently insignificant circumstance! So it is spiritually, "and the god of this world" is ever striving to "blind" us with the dust of this world's sins and pleasures.

July 20.

19. *I am a stranger in the earth: hide not Thy commandments from me.*

"Strangers and pilgrims" is the title applied to believers both in the Old and New Testament. The idea is the same in our Saviour's statement,

"They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." Joh. xvii. 16. "I have chosen you out of the world."—Joh. xv. 19. The older the believer grows, the more he enters into the Psalmist's experience, and feels himself a stranger here. He has no sympathy with the world's language, tastes, or pleasures. Life to him would not be worth living if he were not occupied in his Master's work. This reconciles him to stay; but "*home*" is the under-current of all his thoughts. So does the prayer, "Hide not Thy commandments from me," become most applicable to him. The very absence from home makes the commandment dear; and the more he feels himself "a stranger," the greater will be his love for, and thirst after, the word which guides and directs him on his homeward journey.

July 23.

20. *My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto Thy judgments at all times.*

What "fervent desires" the Psalmist had after God's truth! Feeling himself a stranger in the earth, his hopes and affections all being centred on "things above," he was ever craving closer intercourse with God. "As the hart panteth

after the water-brooks, *so panteth* my soul after Thee," he says; and again, Ps. lxiii. 1, "My soul *thirsteth* for Thee, my flesh *longeth* for Thee, in a dry and thirsty land where no water is;" and in the words of the text: "My soul breaketh for the *longing*," &c. The Psalmist's experience is a very blessed one; let us pray to enter into it more deeply, remembering to our comfort that spiritual longings, unlike earthly cravings, will never end in disappointment. The Lord "will fulfil the desire of them that fear Him."—Ps. cxlv. 19. "He *satisfieth* the *longing* soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness."—Ps. cvii. 9.

July 25.

21. *Thou hast rebuked the proud that are cursed, which do err from Thy commandments.*

"God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace unto the humble."—1 Pet. v. 5. "These six things doth the Lord hate; yea, seven are an abomination unto Him: A proud look," &c. "Every one that exalteth himself shall be abased."—Luke xviii. 14. "A man's pride shall bring him low."

These are some of the many passages in Scripture in which the sin of pride is con-

demned. It is at the root of almost, if not quite, all evil, and in whatsoever form indulged will always cause us to "err from God's commandments."

Contrast with the above the promise made to the humble, Isaiah lvii. 15: "Thus saith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."

July 27.

22. *Remove from me reproach and contempt, for I have kept Thy testimonies.*

Of all trials, perhaps none is harder to bear than "reproach and contempt," especially when felt to be unmerited. And yet it is a trial to which every believer is subject, as he treads in the footsteps of his Lord and Master. For "the disciple is not above his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household."—Matt. x. 24, 25. How keenly did our Lord feel the trial of "reproach and contempt," and yet for our sakes He was content to drink the bitter cup. He "hid not His face from

shame and spitting."—Isa. l. Notice, too, His language, Ps. xxii. and lxix.: "I am a worm and no man, a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn." "Reproach hath broken my heart." What comfort may we find in the Saviour's sympathy, whenever called to pass through the same trial!

July 30.

23. *Princes also did sit and speak against me, but Thy servant did meditate in Thy statutes.*

The trial of "reproach and contempt" seemed to the Psalmist to be aggravated by the fact, "Princes also did sit and speak against" him; but no sooner does he mention it than he turns to his never-failing source of comfort, and adds—"but Thy servant did meditate in Thy statutes." *God's word* was his remedy for every evil, his comfort in every sorrow. "Occupied" therein, and holding communion with Him whose name is Love, his ruffled spirit would soon grow calm, and the remembrance of the bitter taunt and evil-speaking would fade away. The Lord often embitters the world to us that He may endear Himself; and happy shall we be if every fresh trial serve only to drive us to a closer acquaintance with God's word; for then shall we "grow

in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ;" and find that though the Adversary intended us evil, the Lord overruled it, and turned the curse into a blessing.

July 31.

24. *Thy testimonies also are my delight, and my counsellors.*

Do we find God's "testimonies" our "delight," and do we make them our "counsellors?" The more we do the latter, the greater will be our experience of the former. Earthly counsellors, the wisest and the best, are liable to error, and may mislead; but God's word is an unfailing and sure guide. There it is we meet with Him whose name is "Counsellor," and upon whom we may repose with the utmost confidence. In the almighty power of His Divinity and the perfect sympathy of His Humanity, He can enter into our every difficulty; and will never fail to lead, guide, and direct those who put their trust in Him. Never let us need counsel without seeking it in God's "testimonies," remembering the command: "Let your requests be made known unto God." Nothing is too small to be made the subject of prayer. Examples—Hezekiah; Isa. xxxvii. 14; Ezra viii. 21–23;

Nehemiah ii. 4; Abraham's servant, Gen. xxiv. 12–14.

Aug. 1.

25. *My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken Thou me according to Thy word.*

The cleaving of the soul to the dust is the painful experience of every child of God; and the more earnest his desires heavenward, the more conscious is he of the earthward tendency of his natural thoughts and feelings. His constant prayer is—"Quicken me," and his encouragement that he may add—"according to Thy word." Ten times in this one Psalm does David use this plea, and full of comfort it is for us. Looking at our sin-soiled souls, we should often be apt to be too much discouraged to pray—"Quicken *me*," but when we can add—"according to Thy word," then is our hope encouraged, and our faith strengthened, for we know that we trust the word of Him who "keepeth His promise for ever."

Aug. 3.

26. *I have declared my ways, and Thou heardest me: teach me Thy statutes.*

It is so: to the Lord "have I declared my ways," and I would record it to His praise and

glory. I have sought that there should not be a single thought of reserve between my soul and Him. I have told Him my sins and shortcomings, my difficulties and temptations, hopes and fears, joys and sorrows; and when words have failed I have said—"Lord, Thou knowest." He has known all, and He has "heard me." The answer has been so direct and plain I cannot doubt it. And now most earnestly would I pray, as David—"*Teach me Thy statutes.*" For if we desire trial to be sanctified and to produce fruit, should not answered prayers, and granted blessings, be still more productive? The more the Lord teaches us, the more shall we yet ever find there is still to learn.

Aug. 5, 1864 (on our return from London).

27. *Make me to understand the way of Thy precepts, so shall I talk of Thy wondrous works.*

How differently we look upon a subject before and after we understand it! Before, it appears mysterious and perplexing; but as gradually we begin to understahd it, the difficulties vanish, and we see it more and more clearly, till we have made it our own; then are we able to talk of it to others, So is it with things spiritual. Would we *talk* of the wondrous

works of the Lord, we must seek to *understand* His precepts. By nature our understanding is darkened, and we need to pray, as St. Paul did for his Ephesian converts, that "the eyes of our understanding may be enlightened."

28. *My soul melteth for heaviness; strengthen Thou me according to Thy word.*

There may be many causes for heaviness of soul. Perhaps more is being revealed to us of the hidden depths of evil in our own hearts, and very bitter and painful are the discoveries we make. Or, it may be, we are passing through a season of special temptation, and are sorely assailed by the "fiery darts" of the evil one. Whatever be the cause, the effect is to make us feel utterly weak and helpless, so that the prayer, "Strengthen Thou me," seems exactly to meet our need. Each word is full of comfort. It is not a prayer in which all God's people join collectively, but each, individually, as he feels his sense of need says—"Strengthen Thou *me*." And well do we know, as we look up to our loving Lord, as the prayer ascends from our hearts, that the answer that will come back will be—"My grace is sufficient for thee." "Fear thou not; I will strengthen thee."—Isa. xli. 10.

Aug. 9.

29. *Remove from me the way of lying; and grant me Thy law graciously.*

The devil is ever presenting a lie to man, to cause his ruin. Being the "father of lies," he is never at a loss to meet each individual case with the "lie" that is best suited to them. With some he is plain and outspoken, and not being lovers of the truth, God sends them "strong delusion to believe a lie," and they become willing slaves to sin and Satan. With others he is more cautious, and the "lie" is often dressed up in the form of truth before being presented to the mind. The believer is often tried with these temptations, and many times becomes sorely puzzled as to "what is truth." Conscious both of the deceitfulness of his own heart, and the subtle devices of the Evil One, the Psalmist's prayer is one to which he is quick to respond. He feels that the more graciously God grants him the indwelling of His "law," the more will he know the truth that shall make him "free," and the "way of lying" be removed from him.

Aug. 10.

30. *I have chosen the way of truth; Thy judgments have I laid before me.*

David prays in the previous verse—"Remove from me the way of lying;" in this he adds—"I have chosen the way of truth." His prayer for deliverance from the "way of lying" quickened his appreciation of the value of the "way of truth." Is it not so, that the more we desire to be free from any sin, the more earnestly shall we seek the attainment of its opposite virtue? Let us remember the "way of truth" is the only way of life.—2 Thess. ii. 12. Therefore, how important for us to decide whether David's choice is ours. Our wills are free to choose or reject truth. "But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God."—Joh. iii. 21. This will be the proof of the sincerity of our choice: our encouragement will be the promise of the "Spirit of truth" to guide "into all truth."

Aug. 13.

31. *I have stuck unto Thy testimonies: O Lord, put me not to shame.*

David, like Hezekiah, "clave to the Lord, and departed not from following Him." Hav-

ing "chosen the way of truth," and renounced every false way, he here expresses his close adherence to "God's testimonies." To them alone he clung; on them alone all his hopes depended; and hence his prayer—"O Lord, put me not to shame." The Lord's answer to this prayer is—"They shall not be ashamed that wait for Me." And if only "with purpose of heart" we "cleave to the Lord," we need never fear being "put to confusion;" but the language of our heart will be—"The Lord is my strength and my shield: my heart trusted in Him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth, and with my song will I praise Him."

Aug. 14.

32. *I will run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou shalt enlarge my heart.*

How much we value willing service, the cheerful look, the ready hand, and the foot quick to anticipate our wishes! And it is such service the Lord asks of His people. To each He says—"Follow Me:" and those will follow the most quickly and the most closely who stay not to count their footsteps, but who are so occupied with Him who bids them follow, that

irresistibly, with quickened footsteps, they are drawn nearer and nearer, as their hearts are more and more enlarged to receive His love. The constraining love of Christ will ever be the strongest motive power to running the way of His commandments.

Aug. 16.

33. *Teach me, O Lord, the way of Thy statutes, and I shall keep it unto the end.*

The final perseverance of God's people in the way of holiness is here connected with God's teaching them. Herein lie the certainty and comfort of the saints' perseverance. It depends on God, not on themselves. Surely for their comfort He promises—"He will keep the feet of His saints." Surely for their joy He tells them—"Your names are written in heaven." The condition of the covenant of mercy unto life can never be broken, being fulfilled in Christ. The faithfulness of God secures His people: the love of God in Christ is inseparable. Yet there is man's part to this continuance in grace. The means of grace are used, and among them is prayer, even this prayer—"Teach me, O Lord." He is "kept by the power of God," but it is "through faith,"

God's counsel determines his salvation, but also his own will inclines to the means and method, Christ and holiness. Christ's intercession above is the procuring cause, but his own prayers also have to do with his perseverance. They are the breath of the life God gives.

Aug. 17.

(Copied from Rev. C. Holland.)

34. *Give me understanding, and I shall keep Thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart.*

Would we thus keep God's law with whole-hearted observance, it must be by the diligent use of the prayer—"Give me understanding." An understanding unenlightened by the Spirit of God will avail us nothing: "For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent." It is well to remember this in these days, when error, the most subtle and the most dangerous, abounds on all sides. If we attempt to solve difficulties in the strength of our own intellect, we shall find them increase tenfold. It must be so: for the

"natural man" can never receive the things that be of God: they will always be foolishness unto him. Light will come in proportion as we "walk by faith, not by sight,"—in proportion as we are content to be as little children. "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."—Luke x. 21.

Aug. 18.

35. *Make me to go in the path of Thy commandments; for therein do I delight.*

The path of God's "commandments" is the path of all others in which the child of God "delights," and to walk closely therein with God is his highest wish and desire: but he is ever painfully conscious of the workings of the "old man" within him, seeking to lead him aside, and that when he would do good, evil is present with him. Hence his prayer—"*Make* me," &c. He would have every event of his life so ordered as best to promote his growth in grace, that he may live to the glory of his Redeemer. And thus it is that he is called to pass through so many and such varied dispensations. At one time he is led by the Good

Shepherd into green pastures, and beside still waters: kept by the guiding eye (Ps. xxxii.) in the path he should follow: at another time he has to be held in with "bit and bridle," his way hedged up with thorns, and God's chastening hand laid upon him in long and painful trial. But in the words—"As many as I love I rebuke and chasten," he reads the answer to his prayer—"Make me to go," &c., and he is more than content.

Aug. 19.

36. *Incline my heart unto Thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.*

Covetousness is among the sins most strongly condemned in Scripture; and warnings and examples are given us of the fearful results of its indulgence. It is the natural inclination of the heart of every man, and the sin perhaps of all others most early seen in childhood. Having for its aim self-seeking, self-pleasing, and self-exaltation, it must ever be utterly opposed to the spirit of the Gospel. Deliverance from its power must be attained by having the heart inclined to the "testimonies." There we shall find a new object set before us to live for, even *Christ;* and when "the love of Christ constrain-

eth us," we shall henceforth live, not unto ourselves, but unto Him who died for us and rose again.

Aug. 22.

37. *Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken Thou me in Thy way.*

There are two thoughts in this verse: 1st, the eye is an inlet for evil; 2nd, vanity received into the heart produces (as is the case with all sin) a numbing, deadening effect upon the soul: hence the Psalmist's two prayers: "Turn away," &c., and "Quicken," &c. How often through the medium of the eye does the Devil succeed in pouring into the heart of the believer a flood of unholy thoughts, which hinder and distress him on his journey heavenward. The painful consciousness of this makes the Psalmist's prayer so valuable to him. He desires more and more that he may not behold vanity, but that his eyes being turned away from it, he may lay aside every weight, and run with patience the race set before him, *looking unto Jesus*, receiving from Him, hourly and constantly, fresh supplies of quickening grace.

Aug. 23.

38. *Stablish Thy word unto Thy servant, who is devoted to Thy fear.*

In what way does the Lord stablish the word to His servants, and His servants in the word? Is it not by giving them opportunities of putting that word to the proof? Does not the child of God come out of every trial more and more convinced of the stability and the faithfulness of the word in which he has trusted? "Not one thing hath failed," is again and again his testimony; and the more "devoted" he is to the "fear" of the Lord, the more precious to him becomes the word on which he rests. Truly the believer can say, "I have a goodly heritage," when he realises that "all the promises of God in Christ are yea, and in Him, Amen, to the glory of God by us." —2 Cor. i. 20.

Aug. 25.

39. *Turn away my reproach which I fear: for Thy judgments are good.*

There is a *reproach*, that we have no cause to *fear*, but rather to glory in. It is one of the chief privileges of the Gospel—the honourable badge of our profession. (Matt. v. 10-12; compare Phil. i. 29.) But it was the "*reproach*" of bringing dishonour upon the name of his God,

that David *feared*, and deprecated with most anxious and importunate prayer. The fear of this *reproach* is a practical principle of tender watchfulness and circumspection, and of habitual dependence upon an Almighty upholding power. "Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe," will be the constant supplication of one that fears the Lord, and fears himself. We do not perhaps sufficiently consider the active malice of the enemies of the Gospel, "watching for our halting;" else should we be more careful to remove all occasions of "*reproach*" on account of inconsistency of temper or conversation. Those therefore who feel their own weakness, the continual apprehension of danger, the tendency of their heart to backslide from God, and to disgrace "that worthy name by which they are called," will not think this prayer unseasonable or unnecessary—"Turn away my reproach which I fear."

(*From Bridges on* Ps. cxix.)

Aug. 27.

40. *Behold, I have longed after Thy precepts: quicken me in Thy righteousness.*

The longing after the "*precepts*" is the mark of a true believer. Many, like Balaam, desire the consolations of God's word, who yet have no

desire to obey its commands. Not so the Christian: and the greater his longings after the precepts, the more fervent will be his prayer—"Quicken me in Thy righteousness:" "JEHOVAH-TSIDKENU—the LORD our Righteousness:" "Christ Jesus made unto us righteousness:" "made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God *in Him*:"—these are the wonderful and precious truths we desire to be made more alive to feel. Is it not enough to make us "greatly rejoice," and "sing," to think that so perfect a covering has been provided for our sin-stained, defiled souls? To be able to say—"He hath clothed me," "He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness," and to know that thus clothed we are "accepted in the Beloved," "complete in Him," and that "there is *no condemnation* to them which are in Christ Jesus"—it is the knowledge and realisation of this righteousness which is the secret of all true holiness of life.

Aug. 28.

41. *Let Thy mercies come also unto me, O Lord; even Thy salvation, according to Thy word.*

The mercies of the Lord are great; they are spoken of as "manifold mercies," "tender

mercies." What do we know of them? If we are the Lord's we know something, but we should know far more if we prayed oftener—"Let Thy mercies *come unto me.*" We want a more realising sense of the Lord's tender love, and the mercy of all others we want brought home to us is this—"Salvation:" not the mere general belief in a Saviour, but the faith which enables us to say with confidence—*My* Saviour; to feel through our living union with Him that we *are* saved—saved from everlasting misery, endless torment; saved to be "heirs of God," and "joint-heirs with Christ." That this sense of safety is "according to God's word" we know, for is it not written—"He that believeth on the Son *hath* everlasting life," and "shall not come into condemnation, but *is passed* from death unto life?" When this mercy comes to us by God's Spirit, we shall feel it is all so free, so undeserved, that it will leave no room in our hearts for boasting, but, on the contrary, we shall feel deeply—"I am *not worthy of the least* of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which Thou hast shewed unto thy servant."

Aug. 29.

42. *So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me : for I trust in Thy word.*

"Reproach" may come to us in many forms, and through many channels, but if the Lord's "mercies" have so "come" to us that we have heard Him "say" to our souls—"*I am thy salvation*," we shall be furnished with an answer to him that reproacheth us that none can gainsay. If we be reproached for the name of Christ, we shall remember such are "blessed," and the happy sense of the Lord's presence will far outweigh the trial. If, again, we suffer the trial of "reproach" from the enemy of our souls, for our manifold sins and shortcomings, we shall not deny it, but our "trust" not being in anything in ourselves, but in the "Word" alone, we shall be able to remind our Adversary that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinners*," and point to the "*blood*" which "cleanseth from all sin." It is a precious promise in that word—"No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper: and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord; and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord."—Isa. liv. 17

43. *And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth; for I have hoped in Thy judgments.*

Hope in the judgments will not be disappointed, but we shall increasingly learn their faithfulness, comfort, and support: and this it is which will awaken in us a stronger desire to make known the "word of truth" to others. Let us pray often—"Take not the word of truth *utterly* out of my mouth." If it be but a few broken words, and those feebly expressed, yet this were better than by our silence to appear to side with error, or to let another continue in the wrong, when, had we courage to speak, the "word of truth" from our lips might be the means of saving his soul. It was said of one now in glory—"From hearing *of* Christ she came *to* Christ: and from being *with* Christ she spoke *for* Christ." Let us seek that the word of Christ may so "dwell in" us "richly."

Sept. 5.

44. *So shall I keep Thy law continually for ever and ever.*

This verse seems closely connected with those that have gone before, for the power to keep the law is derived from dependence upon God's grace, when through that grace "salvation" has

"come" to our souls. The Adversary often seeks to terrify us with the threat that we shall yet some day fall away, and not persevere to the end. And did the keeping of God's law, a consistent and godly walk, depend only on our own efforts, such fears would without doubt be realised. But our confidence is in the assurance that He which hath begun a good work in us will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.—Phil. i. 6. Let us comfort ourselves with the thought that as by the grace of God we are enabled now to keep His law "continually," we look forward to the time when, set free from the sins and infirmities that at present hinder us, we shall keep it "for ever and ever" perfectly.

Sept. 7.

45. *And I will walk at liberty: for I seek Thy precepts.*

When I look at all my manifold sins and transgressions, at all my past and present failures and shortcomings, what right have I to say—"I will walk at *liberty?*" Do not my sins justly condemn me? and may not Satan claim me as his lawful captive? I answer—Jesus came to "proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." He has

"led captivity captive," and Himself has set me free. "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." "And if the Son shall make you free (it is written), ye shall be free indeed." *Free indeed*—"having *liberty* to enter into the *holiest* by the blood of Jesus." Free indeed: for not only has every charge against me been answered by my Surety, but He has also undertaken to "supply all" my "need" for the future. Well therefore may I walk in the happy liberty of a child of God, for "I seek" His "precepts;" seek them, not from a slavish fear of punishment for the neglect of them, but from the desire to render willing service to Him who has thus redeemed me.

Sept. 9.

46. *I will speak of Thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed.*

Let us aim more at making God's *testimonies* the subject of our conversation, and not be satisfied with merely religious topics. Let us pray that we may neither be ashamed of our Lord nor of "*His words.*" How often do we prove that we are so, when we give the substance only of a text which we have not courage

to quote! The reason we are so often "ashamed" to speak of God's "testimonies" is because *self* occupies so large a place in our hearts. This it is that makes it so difficult to speak to those above, or in, our own rank of life. We are so apt to think of the opinion that will be formed of us, and the remarks that will be made about us; and so through shame our lips are silent. The more we attain David's love for and appreciation of the "testimonies," the less will this be the case, for then will our hearts become so full of the subject, that "out of the abundance of our hearts the lips will speak."

Sept. 13.

47. *And I will delight myself in Thy commandments, which I have loved.*

The things that we *love* are always those in which we find most pleasure. Thus, while our hearts are yet unrenewed, and we are living in the world, our "delight" is in earthly pleasures and amusements. But when once "the love of God" has been "shed abroad in our hearts," and we "have tasted that the LORD is gracious," then a new affection takes possession of our hearts; earthly joys no longer satisfy us; and

the commandments of God, which before were a weariness and trouble to us, become our greatest delight and pleasure. We shall not, however, find it so unless we yield our whole hearts to the Lord. A heart divided between Christ and the world can know but little enjoyment. The happy life is that of entire self-surrender. When we desire to have every thought brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, then it is we find that His "yoke is easy," and His "burden is light."

Sept. 16.

48. *My hands also will I lift up unto Thy commandments, which I have loved; and I will meditate in Thy statutes.*

Food and air form two of the most important elements of our life, and without the proper quantity or quality of either we should soon sicken and die. Just so do *meditation* and *prayer* form two important elements of our spiritual life. Very quickly will our "delight" in, and "love" for, the commandments languish and die, unless kept alive by continual and fresh supplies of grace, sought for and obtained by prayer. Therefore does the Psalmist say—"My hands also will I lift up unto Thy commandments;"

and again, ver. 35, "Make me to go in the path of Thy commandments, for therein do I delight." Therefore, too, does he add—"I will meditate in Thy statutes." By meditation we "inwardly digest" the truths of God's word, and they become the spiritual sustenance and food of our souls. The healthy and the happy Christian will be he who lives most in the atmosphere of prayer and praise; and whose soul is being continually fed with the bread of life.

Sept. 18.

49. *Remember the word unto Thy servant, upon which Thou hast caused me to hope.*

How greatly is our confidence in the word of a friend increased, if, in addition to a promise, he gives us leave to *remind* him of his word. This is the happy privilege of the child of God. His "hope" is in the word of God. He finds in that word that he trusts One who "keepeth His promise for ever," and laying his finger upon any one of the "precious promises," he may say—"*Remember* the word unto Thy servant, &c.," in the full assurance of its fulfilment. How great is the comfort of this privilege in the hour of trial and temptation! When sorely

pressed by the Enemy, cast down and discouraged at the continual discoveries of evil, and the repeated conflicts with the same sin, what intense relief is there in kneeling down and pleading yet again and again "the word;" every fresh deliverance granted becoming an earnest for future victory. Be the need of our souls pardon, or peace, or strength, or grace to overcome some special temptation, or guidance, or increase of faith, or whatever else, we shall ever find in "the word" the promise which gives us the right to say, "*Remember!*" And the more we go up and down among the promises, the more shall we find how our loving Lord loves us thus to put Him in remembrance. Hear one of His many invitations—"Hitherto have ye asked nothing in My name; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full."

Sept. 19.

50. *This is my comfort in my affliction: for Thy word hath quickened me.*

When our souls have experienced the quickening influence of God's word, we are enabled to enjoy its *comforting* power. Being quickened, we can *taste* and *see* that the Lord is gracious; our ears are opened to *hear* His tender accents of

love. We feel that we are no longer alone in our sorrow, but have One to sympathise with us who can enter into every particular of our grief, and who will give us just the support and comfort we need. We are enabled to *tell* out to Him all our griefs, to show before Him our trouble, and to rest in His promise—"When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee." "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." There is, indeed, no comfort like the comfort of God's word in affliction, and the more often we are in sorrow, the more often shall we prove it. In every trial let our resolve be that of the Psalmist, who says elsewhere—"In the Lord's word will I *comfort me;*" remembering, "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and *comfort* of the Scriptures might have hope."—Rom. xv. 4.

Sept. 21.

51. *The proud have had me greatly in derision: yet have I not declined from Thy law.*

Nothing so proves the reality of our faith as the power to hold on our way stedfastly amidst the reproach and derision of ungodly men. In our Lord's parable of the Sower, we find there

were those who received the word with joy, but having no root in themselves, when persecution and tribulation arose they were offended. So are there many professing Christians who will "walk with Religion in her silver slippers, but not be seen with her in rags." When we have entered into the Psalmist's experience of the "comfort" of God's word in affliction, and have found it our delight, and the cause of our rejoicing, we shall then be able to bear the trial of derision without being moved, for we shall feel that we are the happy possessors of a treasure which is better to us than all that the world can give.

Sept. 22.

52. *I remembered Thy judgments of old, O Lord, and have comforted myself.*

God's judgments are a stumbling-block to many. To the eye of sense they often appear severe and mysterious, and tend rather to promote fear and distrust than comfort. But to the child of God, the review of God's past dealings will always afford comfort, even though that review be of His judgments, because he will see that the end of God's judgments is always the establishment of His own glory, and the real

everlasting good of His people. See this in Israel's deliverance from Egypt, and their subsequent history throughout. It is also the individual history of each child of God. Much which may happen to him in his journey through life, and which appears to worldly men mysterious and hard, and even, as they think, unjust, he can receive, satisfied that time will prove it "all" to have been working together for his "good." And again and again he "comforts himself" with retracing God's dealings with His people in all ages, and finding Him "the same, yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

Sept. 23.

53. *Horror hath taken hold upon me, because of the wicked that forsake Thy law.*

While drawing comfort to himself from the recollection of God's judgments, "horror" took hold of the Psalmist as he considered the fearful condition of the wicked upon whom those judgments would be executed. With what feelings of horror should we witness a family gathered upon the roof of a house enveloped in flames, and from which there was no possibility of rescuing them! With what prayers and tears should we seek that every effort might be made for

their deliverance! Yet not so fearful their condition as that of multitudes around us, who, daily forsaking God's law, "are living in continual danger of everlasting destruction." Shall we quietly sit by and see them perish, or be satisfied to mourn over their sad condition? Shall we not rather pray that we may be roused to yet greater earnestness in seeking their salvation, knowing that as long as life lasts there is yet hope for even the apparently most hopeless. The feelings of "horror" with which we regard the fearful condition of the lost should awaken in us the deepest feelings of humility and gratitude, for, that we are not as they are, to God's *grace alone* we owe it.

Sept. 26.

54. *Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.*

"*Thy statutes*"—"*my* songs." How completely this betokens a heart wholly given to the Lord, and whose "delight" is in His "law." Not satisfied that the "statutes" should be to him merely a rule of duty, he so rejoices in them that they become "songs" to cheer him during his stay in the "house of his pilgrimage." Such an one will ever be raising fresh Eben-ezers in his

path, as he journeys on; and will ever be going forth to fresh conflicts, strong in the assurance—"Thou shalt *compass* me about with *songs of deliverance.*" Happy will he be, too, when the day comes in which "the house" of his "pilgrimage," the "tent" in which he now dwells, shall be taken down, and he shall instead "be clothed upon" with his "house which is from heaven," and shall join the great multitude in singing "the new song before the throne."

Sept. 28.

55. *I have remembered Thy name, O Lord, in the night, and have kept Thy law.*

Our great Adversary never sleeps, and the wakeful hours of the night are often seasons of special temptation; but in this is our refuge—*The name of the Lord* is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and *is safe.*" "I *remembered* Thy name," &c. The name of the Lord is expressive of His character, of that whereby He makes Himself known to His people: and how precious are these manifestations of Himself—sometimes as a tender "Shepherd," or a loving "Father," or as "Guide," "Comforter," "Intercessor," &c., but above all as a gracious "Saviour"—"JESUS!" the name

which is the key to all the promises, and unlocks to us all the privileges of the children of God! With what sweet comfort does the recollection of this name come to us in the *night* season of sorrow, when all around is dark! The remembrance, too, of this name enables us to add with the Psalmist, we "have kept Thy law." In Jesus all the law's demands have been fully met and satisfied, and we "in Him" stand "complete," "*accepted in the Beloved.*"

Sept. 30.

56. *This I had, because I kept Thy precepts.*

Precepts and promises are linked together continually throughout God's word, and in the keeping of the one we obtain the reward of the other; reward, not of merit, for from first to last the believer can claim nothing on this ground, but of *grace.* Do I enjoy a large share of the "peace which passeth all understanding?" By God's grace I am enabled to be "careful for nothing:" so "*this* I had, because I kept Thy precepts." Am I rejoicing in deliverance from trouble? By God's grace I have been enabled to "call upon the Lord:" so again, "*this* I had, because I kept Thy precepts." Is the Lord drawing near to me in close and familiar fellow-

ship? By His grace I have "kept His words," and have opened the door of my heart to receive Him.—Rev. iii. 20.; Joh. xiv. 23. So "*this* I had," &c. We gather from the parable of the Talents (Luke xix.) and other parts of Scripture, that the reward of grace will be carried out in the rewards of glory. Each vessel filled (so there will be no sense of want), but each filled according to its capacity, the greater holding more than the lesser: but *all* of *grace*, and, from the Apostle Paul down to the weakest child of God now on earth, all will join in ascribing praise and glory to Him to whom alone it is due, and join in singing—"*Worthy* is the *Lamb* who was slain!" "Thou hast redeemed us unto God by Thy blood!"

Oct. 1.

57. *Thou art my portion, O Lord; I have said that I would keep Thy words.*

If the "Lord" be our "portion" we are rich indeed, however it may fare with us in this world. The best portion the world can offer can never *satisfy*, but when the *Lord* is our portion we receive of His "fulness," and He supplies all our need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. His promise is—"My

people shall be satisfied with My goodness:" "For I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul."—Jer. xxxi. 14–25. The worldling's portion ends with death, but the believer can say—"God is the strength of my heart, and *my portion for ever.*"

We, who can say—"Thou art my portion, O Lord," will also add—"I have said that I would keep Thy words," though this may often involve much that is painful: much that is dear to flesh and blood will have to be parted with, and many of our own plans and wishes will have to be laid aside; yet is it in this very way that the Lord makes room for Himself in our hearts, and we shall regret no empty place which *He* fills.

Oct. 3.

58. *I entreated Thy favour (marg. face) with my whole heart: be merciful unto me according to Thy word.*

The child that has enjoyed the happy consciousness of his Father's love and presence cannot be happy if that Father's face be hidden, and the sense of His "favour" withheld; but with his "whole heart" will he cry—"Be merciful unto me according to Thy word." The very fact that he can add "*according to Thy word*" is

the warrant that his prayer will both be heard and answered. "*Mercy*," according to God's word," is not the mere vague term as men are apt to apply it, but it is mercy based on the covenant, mercy in and through Christ, mercy, in which God's justice as well as His love is seen. In Jesus—"Mercy and truth are met together: righteousness and peace have kissed each other." There it is the sinner fixes his eye when he prays—"Be merciful unto me *according to Thy word*." When the Lord does "lift up the light of His countenance upon us," and "cause His face to shine," then is His "favour as dew upon grass," refreshing and revivifying our dry, barren souls, and making them to be as a "watered garden," "bringing forth fruits of righteousness to His praise and glory."

Oct. 5.

59. *I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto Thy testimonies.*

The sincere cry for "mercy" (ver. 58) will always result in the desire to "search and try our ways," and to bring them to the test of God's word. This "calling of our own ways to remembrance" will be very, very humbling as we discover how deeply dyed they all are with sin,

and our confession will be—"*My* ways how contrary to *Thy* testimonies, O Lord!" Yet shall we be thankful for every fresh *discovery* of evil, for we can only "turn our feet unto the testimonies" by finding out first where we have "erred and gone astray." We walk on slippery ground, with a heart "bent to backsliding," but our comfort lies in the promise—"He will keep the feet of His saints." Whatever be the evil we deplore, we shall find in the testimonies the remedy we need.

Oct. 8.

60. *I made haste, and delayed not to keep Thy commandments.*

When important results are to be attained from a certain course of action, how promptly, and with what decision, do we act! We waste no time in delay, but "make haste" to act at once. Thus did David in "keeping God's commandments." Eternal interests were at stake, and he would lose nothing by delay. We do well to follow his example. How many have been eternally lost, because they "delayed" till the day of grace had gone by. "Behold, *now* is the accepted time: behold, now is the day of salvation!" Did we resolve to "make haste,"

and act more promptly in keeping God's commandments,—doing at once the duty that comes before us,—speaking at once the word we feel we ought to speak,—we should become far more vigorous, useful Christians, and not so often have to lament over neglected opportunities, which have slipped by us while we "delayed" to make use of them.

Oct. 9.

61. *The bands of the wicked have robbed me: but I have not forgotten Thy law.*

Our Lord's advice is—"Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where *thieves do not break through and steal.*" This had the Psalmist done; the "law" of God's mouth was "better to him than thousands of gold and silver," and no outward loss could affect his possession of this treasure. This was the case, too, with those of whom St. Paul says (Heb. x. 34)—"Ye took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance." The worldly man has nothing to compensate for any outward loss he may sustain, but to the believer who has found the "Pearl of great price," and whose treasure

is laid up above, every outward loss only tends to prove to him the security and safety of his heavenly possessions. "The world passeth away and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

Oct. 13.

62. *At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto Thee, because of Thy righteous judgments.*

The Psalmist's habit of meditating in the law day and *night*, made the night season often a time of much spiritual profit, and so sensibly was he affected with God's "righteous judgments" that he was constrained even "at *midnight*" to "rise and give thanks." How great the contrast between the spirituality of this man of God, and that of our cold, slothful souls, so backward to praise, and so empty oftentimes of any spiritual longing or enjoyment. The secret of attaining more of this fervency of spirit is to be found in Ps. lxiii. 5, 6—"My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise Thee with joyful lips: when I remember *Thee* upon my bed, and meditate upon *Thee* in the night watches."

Oct. 15.

63. *I am a companion of all them that fear Thee, and of them that keep Thy precepts.*

While the believer is in the world he will often be thrown with those who do not fear the Lord, nor keep His precepts: he will not, however, choose such as His "companions," but will seek his friends among those like-minded with himself. Christian fellowship and intercourse is a blessing greatly to be desired and cultivated: by it we are enabled mutually to strengthen and comfort one another on our journey heavenward. It was a blessing felt and understood by Solomon when he wrote the words—"Iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend:" and again, "Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel."—Prov. xxvii. 9 and 17.

Oct. 18.

64. *The earth, O Lord, is full of Thy mercy; teach me Thy statutes.*

If we study the books of Nature and Providence by the light of God's word, as did the Psalmist, we shall find how true it is, that—"The earth, O Lord, is full of Thy mercy." "The Lord

is good to all, His tender mercies are over all His works." We shall exclaim—"O Lord, how manifold are Thy works! in wisdom hast Thou made them all: the earth is full of Thy riches." A sense of God's mercy, whether to himself or others, always awoke in the Psalmist the prayer—"Teach me Thy statutes." See this in vers. 12, 26, 64, 68, 124, 135. So true is it that he who loves most will serve best.

Oct. 20.

65. *Thou hast dealt well with Thy servant, O Lord, according to Thy word.*

There are times in the life of the child of God, when he is inclined to say—"All these things are against me." But this is not his language in the retrospect: then those very things that seemed against him he sees were working together for his good; and he confesses —"Thou hast dealt well with Thy servant," &c. That season of bitter trial, when his will was crossed again and again, and he was made to walk in a path directly contrary to the one he would have chosen, he sees now was "well" for him. Then it was that he learnt more than he ever knew before of a Father's tender love, of a Saviour's constant presence, and then it was he

realised more than he ever knew before of "the peace which passeth all understanding." That season, too, of temptation, when in sore conflict with sin and Satan he made humbling discoveries of the exceeding vileness and weakness of his own heart, even that time too was "well" for him; for then he learnt more entirely to reject all confidence in the flesh; and Jesus and His righteousness became the more precious to him as he felt his own nothingness. And so, with each and every event of his life, whether in Providence or in grace, in *all* hath the Lord "dealt" with him; and so with humble confidence, and strengthened faith, he looks forward to the future, assured that the Lord who hath thus dealt well with him will ever deal well with him "according to" His "word." God's past mercies are always earnests of future blessings, because "the Lord *hath been* mindful of us," therefore do we know "*He will* bless us."—Ps. CXV. 12.

Oct. 23.

66. *Teach me good judgment and knowledge: for I have believed Thy commandments.*

St. Paul desires for the Philippian converts, "that their love may abound yet more and more

in knowledge and in all judgment." St. Peter, too, urges upon the believer to add to his faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge. We need to be thus reminded, and we shall do well to take the Psalmist's prayer much into daily use; for how often are we placed in circumstances when it becomes all-important that we should act with "judgment and knowledge," lest through our want of wisdom we "give occasion to the Adversary to speak reproachfully." Though God chooses the weak and foolish often to confound the wise and mighty, yet is the believer to draw no licence from this to act or speak foolishly; on the contrary, wisdom, unlimited except by the faith which asks for it, is promised him (James i. 6), and he is repeatedly commanded to use all diligence in his search after "true understanding;" see this especially, Prov. ii., where he is rewarded in his search with the promise—"Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of His mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. When wisdom entereth into thy heart, and knowledge is pleasant to thy soul. Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee."

Oct. 24.

67. *Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept Thy word.*

If this be our experience, happy has it been for us that we have been afflicted. God's end in affliction is to bring us near to Himself, "for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness." It is the Shepherd's rod to restore the wanderer to the fold. Well is it when we thus "hear the rod, and who hath appointed it." Contrast David's acknowledgment of the benefit resulting to himself from affliction with the four negatives of the four great intentions of affliction (Zeph. iii. 2): "She obeyed not the voice; she received not correction; she trusted not in the Lord; she drew not near to her God."

Oct. 26.

68. *Thou art good, and doest good; teach me Thy statutes.*

"He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" The child of God loves thus to trace up all the tokens of the Lord's goodness to him to the source from which they flow. To feel that all his comforts, pleasures, and blessings, great and small, have

been purchased for him; and the more this is realised the more often will his heart respond—"Thou art good, and doest good." It will be equally his testimony in affliction as in prosperity, and trials and sorrows will only serve as a dark background to cause the bright and manifold tokens of God's goodness to stand out the more clearly. Two thoughts intensify the sense of God's goodness to the believer: the one its freeness, the other his own unworthiness; both lead to the prayer—"Teach me Thy statutes."

Oct. 29.

69. *The proud have forged a lie against me; but I will keep Thy precepts with my whole heart.*

How precious is the promise to the child of God—"Thou shalt be *hid* when the tongue scourgeth" (Job. v. 21, *marg.*). Is it not a sore scourge when employed in "forging lies" against the servants of the Lord? And yet have there been in all ages those who are only too ready to indulge in "evil-speaking, lying, and slandering." The Psalmist supplies us with an example how to act when called to pass through this trial. Let *our life* contradict the lie. Let us "keep the precepts with our whole heart," and the

language of our lips will be—"O how great is Thy goodness which Thou hast laid up for them that trust in Thee before the sons of men! Thou shalt hide them in the secret of Thy presence from the pride of men; Thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues."

Nov. 1.

70. *Their heart is as fat as grease; but I delight in Thy law.*

The Psalmist makes a similar statement with regard to the ungodly, both in the 17th and 73rd Psalms: "They are enclosed in their own fat, with their mouth they speak proudly." "Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish." It seems to betoken those who are replete, and satisfied with their "portion in this life," and have no wish to receive, nor power to retain, divine teaching. But how fearful the condition of such! "Surely Thou didst set him in slippery places: Thou castedst them down into destruction," &c.—Ps. lxxiii. 18. Contrast this with those whose "delight is in the law." Truly blessed are they, for they shall be "like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in

his season: his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."—Ps. i. To be able truthfully to say—"I delight in Thy law," indicates a healthy state of soul, an appetite for spiritual things. In times of great spiritual or temporal prosperity, God's children need to be on their guard lest the charge against Israel prove true of them—"Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked." "According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted: therefore have they forgotten me." —Deut. xxxii. 15; Hos. xiii. 6.

Nov. 3.

71. *It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn Thy statutes.*

To others, the afflictions of the children of God may often appear strange, and sometimes it seems as if those who needed them the least were called to bear the most. But we see but the outside, and know not the "need be" for each trial, as He does who sends it. The child of God will not himself feel that any sorrow has been unnecessary, but will unhesitatingly set his seal to the Psalmist's testimony—"It is *good* for *me* that I have been afflicted;" "good" for many reasons, but among the foremost, "that I might

learn Thy statutes." In affliction we learn experimentally what before we knew only in theory. How many a precious truth should we have failed to learn, had it not been burnt into us in the furnace of affliction! Each truth so received deepens our love and value for the "statutes," and enables us the more fully to enter into the Psalmist's experience in the next verse.

Nov. 10.

72. *The law of Thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver.*

However poor the child of God may be in the world's estimation, yet is he rich. Thousands of gold and silver may quickly "make themselves wings and fly away," but he possesses in the word of God "*durable* riches," "whose price is above rubies," and "more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold." It is in affliction that the value and preciousness of God's word are learnt. "Thousands of gold and silver" can never speak peace to a troubled conscience, or bind up a broken heart, or heal a wounded spirit; therefore it is that God's word is so much "*better:*" there we may find a balm for every wound, grace for every need, the full satisfying of every desire.

Nov. 11.

73. *Thy hands have made me and fashioned me: give me understanding that I may learn Thy commandments.*

It is well for us to remember by whom, and for what purpose, we have been created. "O Lord, Thou art our Father: we are the clay, and Thou our Potter; and we all are the work of Thy hand." Oh, for a more yielding, submissive spirit, that we may become in the hands of the Potter "vessels unto honour (even His honour), sanctified, and meet for the Master's use." This desire awoke the Psalmist's prayer—"Give me understanding, that I may learn Thy commandments." He would devote the life given him to the service of the Giver. The Lord has a double claim upon us as our Creator and Redeemer. "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."—1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

Nov. 17.

74. *They that fear Thee will be glad when they see me, because I have hoped in Thy word.*

Have we not often felt the gladdening effects of intercourse with a hopeful Christian? When our spirits are sad, and perhaps our faith and love

at a low ebb, we seem to gain fresh courage and strength as we hear another speak of the Lord's unchangeable love and tender faithfulness. Hope in the *word* is the hope "that maketh not ashamed," and this, "because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts." The more we live in the bright beams of that love, the more brightly shall we, both by life and conversation, reflect Christ; and it is only as He is seen in us that we become a source of blessing, or cause of gladness, to others. Therefore, for our own peace, for the good of others, and, above all, for the Lord's glory, should we aim to be *hopeful* Christians.

Nov. 20.

75. *I know, O Lord, that Thy judgments are right, and that Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.*

This is a verse with which the believer would like to endorse every trial through which he has been called to pass. He alone can set his seal to its truth, for the people of the world have no such resting-place in their affliction. Happy indeed are we, when we can say with sincerity —"I know," &c.; for how much of the *bitterness* of sorrow is then taken away, and what a different aspect do trials wear, when we possess

this key to their meaning. It is the believer's testimony not only when he sees God's judgments visited upon others, but when he himself is suffering from the chastening rod. He remembers the words—"As many as I love I rebuke and chasten;" and, looking up through his tears, he says—"I *know*, O Lord, that Thy judgments are *right*, and that Thou in *faithfulness* hast afflicted *me*." The trials of God's people form a fertile subject for their praise and gratitude, as in each sorrow they learn some fresh lesson of the Lord's loving faithfulness.

Nov. 23.

76. *Let, I pray Thee, Thy merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to Thy word unto Thy servant.*

It has been beautifully said, that when God lays one hand in chastisement upon His children, He places the other beneath to support and comfort them. Thus the Psalmist looked for comfort to the same source from which his affliction came—"*Thou* in faithfulness hast afflicted me," he says, and then prays—"Let *Thy* merciful kindness be for my comfort." His prayer should often be ours. The more

"comfort" we derive from a sense of the Lord's "merciful kindness," the more will faith and love grow in us, and the better able shall we be "to comfort others with the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."

Nov. 25.

77. *Let Thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live: for Thy law is my delight.*

The "tender mercies of the Lord are over all His works," but through blindness and hardness of heart we often fail to recognise them; hence the need of the Psalmist's prayer—"Let Thy tender mercies *come unto me.*" Nothing will so soon revive and quicken spiritual life in us as this; and the more they are realised, the more shall we confess that the mercies of the Lord are indeed "*tender* mercies." Perhaps never are they so much felt to be so as in the hour of affliction and sorrow. Then, too, does the "law" become increasingly our "delight,' as we find how its every page abounds with images expressive of the Lord's tender love to His children. Thus, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him."—Ps. ciii. "As one whom his *mother* comforteth, so will I comfort you."—Isa. lxvi. 13

And again—"He shall feed His flock like a Shepherd, He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall *gently* lead those that are with young."—Isa. xl. 11. These are some of the multitude of tender mercies that, coming to us by the Spirit, comfort us in our hour of sorrow.

Nov. 29.

78. *Let the proud be ashamed; for they dealt perversely with me without a cause: but I will meditate in Thy precepts.*

We shall often defeat and baffle the enemies of our souls, if, instead of entering into conflict with them, we refuse to listen to their suggestions, and turn, as it were, a deaf ear to them, and meditate instead on the "precepts." Thus finding us "occupied" (Prayer Book) they will be ashamed, and foiled in their attempt to do us harm. Thus did Nehemiah act when his enemies sought to hinder his work in building the wall of Jerusalem. In how many ways did they deal perversely with him, and "go wickedly about to destroy" him. When they sought to tempt him down into the plain to cause his overthrow, he met the subtle temptation with the wise answer—"I am doing a great work,

so that I cannot come down; why should the work cease, whilst I leave it and come down to you?"—Neh. vi. 3. It is recorded that when the work was finished—"It came to pass, that when all our enemies heard thereof, they were *much cast down in their own eyes:* for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God." —Ver. 16.

Thus were the "proud" "ashamed," and God's servants strengthened.

Dec. 6.

79. *Let those that fear Thee turn unto me, and those that have known Thy testimonies.*

The Lord sometimes places His people in circumstances where they are greatly cut off from the comfort and blessing of intercourse with fellow-Christians. This is for the very purpose of teaching them to depend more directly upon Himself; that they may learn both His willingness and His power to "supply all" their "need." Yet, on the other hand, they will not learn to despise the channels through which blessing may come to their souls, but, on the contrary, as they learn to give these their right place they will more value every means of grace, and the Psalmist's prayer will meet with a quick

response from their hearts. A special blessing is promised to those who fear the Lord, and speak often one to another of Him. (See Mal. iii. 16, 17.) And we find St. Paul saying—"*God*, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of *Titus*." It was God that comforted, but Titus was the channel through whom the comfort came.

Dec. 13.

80. *Let my heart be sound in Thy statutes, that I be not ashamed.*

There is one word of great importance in this verse, and that word is "heart:" "Let my heart be sound," &c. However clear our views of truth in theory, they will avail us nothing in the hour of trial or temptation if the heart be untouched. Many have made shipwreck of their faith altogether merely from "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." But let the Psalmist's whole prayer be ours; for how important is it, in these days, when error abounds on the right hand and on the left, that our hearts should be "*sound*" in the statutes! Let us never forget that almost every truth of God's word has a twofold aspect, and that all the truths are blended together in one perfect

whole. There is ever a tendency in the human mind to separate these truths, and to hold up one to the exclusion of the rest. It is this one-sided view of truth that leads many into error, and causes them to "be ashamed" before the enemies of the truth. Had not St. John learnt the true secret whereby alone our hearts can be kept "sound" in "the statutes" of the Lord, when he wrote—"And now, little children, *abide in Him;* that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming."—1 Joh. ii. 28.

Dec. 16.

81. *My soul fainteth for Thy salvation, but I hope in Thy word.*

Fainting souls need a strong cordial for their support and comfort. David in this verse lets us into the secret where such may be found, even in the *word* of the Lord, for "God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" Simple faith in the word is a lesson we much need to learn: we are so apt to rest in frames and feelings, but these are ever

varying, and dependent upon so many outward circumstances, that they can give us no sure ground on which to build our hopes: whereas the word of the Lord is a strong Rock which will never fail us, and however devoid we may be of any sensible enjoyment of Divine love, yet we may say—"I have a *good hope because of Thy word.*"—(Prayer Book version.) "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the *word of our God shall stand for ever.*"—Isa. xl. 8.

Dec. 19.

82. *Mine eyes fail for Thy word, saying, When wilt Thou comfort me?*

"*O tarry thou the Lord's leisure: be strong, and He shall comfort* thine heart; and put thou thy trust in the Lord"—Ps. xxvii. 16 (Prayer Book version). "Why art thou cast down, O my soul; and why art thou disquieted in me? Hope thou in God; for I shall *yet* praise Him for the help of His countenance. Hope thou in God, for I shall *yet* praise Him, who is the health of my countenance and my God." "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God ye might receive the promise. For yet a little

while and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry."—Heb. xi. 35–37. "And God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes: and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away."—Rev. xxi. 4.

Dec. 24.

83. *For I am become like a bottle in the smoke; yet do I not forget Thy statutes.*

The Psalmist has been gradually descending the scale of sorrow: First, "my soul fainteth," then, "mine eyes fail;" now, the body sympathising with the spirit's anguish, he says—"I am become like a bottle in the smoke." It seems to present a picture of one withering under the scorching influence of prolonged affliction. But is it not in this very way that God's people are taught to enter more deeply into the meaning of the words—"*the fellowship of his sufferings.*" For what was the language of our Redeemer in His humiliation? Was it not—"My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws, and Thou hast brought me into the dust of death?" "I am weary of my

crying; my throat is dried; mine eyes fail while I wait for my God."—Ps. xxii. and lxix. Shall we shrink back from any discipline that tends to show us more our union with Christ; shall we not rather "rejoice that we are made partakers of His sufferings?" It is this that will enable us to add with David even in the hour of our bitterest sorrow—"Yet do I not forget Thy statutes."

Jan. 3. ———

84. *How many are the days of Thy servant? When wilt Thou execute judgment on them that persecute me?*

When tried and weary with the conflict with sin and temptation, the believer may be often ready to echo these words of the Psalmist—"How many," &c., and to say—"How long, Lord, how long?" But let us remember, for our comfort, the promise—"The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet *shortly*." Impatience to be freed from suffering should be watched against. "Our days" are all numbered, and we are here for an "*appointed time*," to do our Master's work. His prayer for us is—"I pray *not* that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep

them from the evil." Therefore let us wait on, remembering the injunction—"In your patience *possess ye your* souls."

Jan. 4.

85. *The proud have digged pits for me, which are not after Thy law.*

A pitfall is a secret, subtle snare; its peculiar danger consists in causing a *sudden fall* to those it entraps. Beware of such in your Christian course. The great enemy of souls is never at a loss to devise ingenious devices to cause our destruction. Foiled perhaps in open conflict, when we are on the watch and prepared to resist him, he may appear to leave us for a time, but only that he may dig a pit, and lay a snare, in our path. Never, therefore, do we more need to be on our guard than when all things outwardly and inwardly appear to prosper with us; then may it be that we are standing on the verge of some horrible pit. Our security lies in the consciousness of our weakness and danger, and in committing ourselves entirely to the Lord for guidance and upholding. "Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe." "Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord, for He shall pluck my feet out of the net." "The Lord shall be thy

confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken." "He will keep the feet of His saints."
Jan. 9.

86. *All Thy commandments are faithful; they persecute me wrongfully: help Thou me.*

How great the contrast between the fickleness and the unjust dealing of men, with the "faithfulness" of the word of the Lord. Therefore does the Psalmist turn from his persecutors, and looking up to his covenant-keeping God, he prays—"Help *Thou* me." How short his prayer, and yet how full! We are ever being placed in circumstances when "help" is needed, and yet are ever proving how "vain is the help of man." Let us not be discouraged, but remember we have in heaven a "great High Priest," not one who "cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities," but who "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." "Let us *therefore* come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to *help in time of need*." How precious is the thought that we rely for help on One who has both the *power* and the *will* to succour; and never will the prayer—"*Help Thou*

me," ascend from our hearts unheeded, for God, "our refuge and strength," is "a very *present* help in trouble," and promises to each needy soul the gracious assurance—"Fear not, *I* will *keep thee*."

Jan. 13. ———

87. *They had almost consumed me upon earth: but I forsook not Thy precepts.*

Does not the firm resolve to hold fast the "*precepts*" provoke the enemy of our souls to much strife with us? The command is to "keep the precepts diligently," and the blessing resulting therefrom is that "the diligent soul shall be made fat." Therefore does our great Adversary desire to see us lurkwarm—negative in our religion: and can he but succeed in lulling our souls to sleep, he is satisfied to leave us very much alone, knowing there will be but little growth in our souls, and, consequently, but little or no effect on our part to win souls from his ranks. But as soon as he finds us, like the Psalmist, "longing after the precepts"—"seeking," "meditating in them," then does he strive by persecution—either stirring up outward enemies, or by the inward assaults and "fiery darts"—to discourage and destroy us. Our com-

ort lies in the thought, that He that is *for* us is stronger than he that is against us; and He who awakened in our hearts the desire to "keep the precepts diligently" will enable us not to "forsake" them, even though it should happen with us as with the Psalmist, that we be "almost consumed upon the earth."

Jan. 25.

88. *Quicken me after Thy loving-kindness; so shall I keep the testimony of Thy mouth.*

A realised sense of the Lord's loving-kindness will never fail to awaken in us the desire and resolve to "keep the testimony of His mouth." Love *must* serve. We are ever needing quickening grace, so much is there both around us and within us to deaden spiritual life. When deploring the coldness and deadness of our souls, let us waste no time in useless regrets, but lift up our hearts in prayer, saying, O Lord, *quicken me after Thy loving-kindness:* let us turn away our eyes altogether from self, and "looking off unto Jesus," seek from Him some clearer manifestation of Himself. How often does He draw near at such times, and melt our ice-bound souls with renewed expressions of His never-changing, tender-loving faithfulness! Thus does He give

us the "oil of joy for mourning," and "the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness," and afresh do we yield to His service the life He has so revived.

Jan. 30.

89. *For ever, O Lord, Thy word is settled in heaven.*

Tempest-tossed and troubled Christian, where are you seeking rest for your soul? You look *within* you, but you can find no ground for confidence there: yesterday you were a bright and joyous Christian; to-day faith and hope have fled, and your hands hang down in despondency. Thus ever varying, ever changing, are your frames and feelings. You look *around* you, but you see the same mark on all things; nothing is lasting, nothing secure. But turn away your eyes from all else, and fix them on the *word*: this alone "endureth for ever," "for ever" "settled:" here alone may the anchor of hope find "sure and stedfast" ground on which to "lay hold." Immutable are the words of Him who hath said—"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but *My words* shall not pass away." Therefore is it that *trust in the word* can never be disappointed.

Feb. 4.

90. *Thy faithfulness is unto all generations; Thou hast established the earth, and it abideth.*

"Having liberty to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus let us draw near let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering (for *He* is *faithful* that promised)." "*God* is *faithful*, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord:"—"*faithful* and just to *forgive* us our sins, and to *cleanse* us from all unrighteousness." "The *Lord* is *faithful*, who shall *stablish* you and *keep* you from evil." "*God* is *faithful*, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly: and I pray God your spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. *Faithful* is He that calleth you, who also will do it."

Surely with the revealed record of such faithfulness, sealed too by the experience of every believing child of God, we may well add with the Psalmist—"It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto Thy name, O Most High: To shew forth thy loving-kind-

ness in the morning, and thy *faithfulness* every night."—Ps. xcii. 1, 2.

Feb. 7.

91. *They continue this day according to Thine ordinances; for all are Thy servants.*

How surrounded are we with tokens of the Lord's loving faithfulness! The very return of night and day in such regular succession, and of which we think so little, is a constant witness to the truth of our convenant-keeping God—"Thou hast established the earth, and it abideth." "While the earth remaineth, *seed time* and *harvest*, and *cold* and *heat*, and *summer* and *winter*, and *day* and *night* shall not cease:" *therefore* "they continue this day according to Thine ordinances; for all are Thy servants." All act in obedience to Him who "upholdeth all things by the word of His power." See, too, how God employs this very token as a pledge of the security of His covenant with His people.—Jer. xxxiii. 20, 21, 25, 26. Is not all done on God's part that can be done to inculcate *trust* in us? He gives us His *word*, His *promise*, His *oath*, His *covenant*, and, besides this, *daily* tokens to remind us of His faithfulness.

Feb. 10.

92. *Unless Thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction.*

The greater our apprehension of the joys of religion, the fuller will be our source of strength and comfort in the day of adversity. The *delights* of the law can alone outweigh the sorrows of affliction; that they do so is evident from the way in which so many of God's children rise above some crushing sorrow, to the surprise of all around them. But deep within their hearts is the secret "joy" with which no "stranger intermeddleth," and deeper still the double peace of a mind stayed upon *God;* and thus strengthened both in soul and body they pass through the deep waters, and come forth to own with heartfelt gratitude—"I should *then* have perished in mine affliction, unless *Thy* law had been my delights."

Feb. 15.

93. *I will never forget Thy precepts: for with them Thou hast quickened me.*

Repeated had been the Psalmist's prayers for "quickening," and earnest his search after the "precepts." Now is the acknowledgment of answered prayer, and this through the very channel of the "precepts" that he had so "longed after." Thus

does God *satisfy* the desires and longings, that He *first* awakens in the heart of His children; the remembrance of past help received will ever kindle fresh trust and love in our souls: and when they droop again in the discovery of some fresh evil, or in the hour of some new sorrow, or, perhaps, in the recurrence again of some old trials, they will revive as we call to remembrance former times wherein we had been quickened: thus will the precepts become increasingly precious. Perhaps their quickening influence is never so truly learnt as in the hour of affliction: then, when our need is the greatest, and our strength the weakest, is their power most felt.

Feb. 17.

94. *I am Thine, save me; for I have sought Thy precepts.*

While the *proof* that we are the Lord's is to be seen in the fact that we have "sought the precepts," yet the believer will not build his hopes of assurance on this ground; for well he knows he would never have "sought the precepts," had not the "Good Shepherd" first sought and found him; therefore he rests, not

in the Spirit's work *in* him, but in the Saviour's work *for* him; and with faith receives the word of the Lord—"Fear not, for *I have redeemed* thee; I have called thee by thy name; *thou art mine.*" Thus "the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we *are* the children of God." Then, how great is our security! how high is our privilege! how deep is our responsibility! Blessed be God that we are His "purchased people:" with confidence may we in our every hour of need cry—"Save me;" and though, like Peter, we be ready to sink in deep waters, the hand of Omnipotence will be stretched out for our help, and we shall hear in tender accents of love the voice of our *Saviour*, saying, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

Feb. 25.

95. *The wicked have waited for me to destroy me; but I will consider Thy testimonies.*

In the literal enemies of David how true a picture do we find of the spiritual adversaries of the soul! There is the same continual warfare, the same eager watching for our destruction, constant and ever varying modes of assaults, and oftentimes should we be ready to give up in

despair, were it not for the "testimonies." In considering these, we find for our encouragement and strength, that "stronger is He that is *for* us than he that is against us," and "that armour" has been provided by the Captain of our salvation, which if we do but "put on," we shall be able to "stand against the *wiles* of the devil." How much have we *yet* to learn of the exceeding power of the word of God, which was David's reply in every hour of need, his defence in every assault of the wicked one! May we become as expert as he was in the use of the "sword of the Spirit."

March 4.

96. *I have seen an end of all perfection; but Thy commandment is exceeding broad.*

How great is the contrast here between the finite and the infinite! Take the best of earth's blessings, and enjoy it in its greatest "perfection," yet the time must come when it will "come to an end," and the heart that knows no better joy will be left with an aching sense of want. Contrast this with—"This is His commandment, that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ:" for will not faith in Christ bring peace to the soul?—peace, which in its very nature is not such "as the world

giveth." The law's demands, requiring of all men perfect love to God and man, are indeed "exceeding broad," but standing alone reach only to our condemnation. But let us see Jesus our Substitute, paying the law's penalty, and fulfilling for us all righteousness, then the commandment of the law and Gospel, united in one perfect whole, becomes so "*exceeding* broad" that throughout all eternity we shall never "come to the end" of the glory, and grace, and wisdom, and love, that planned the scheme of man's redemption.

March 13.

97. *O how I love Thy law! it is my meditation all the day.*

What child of God has ever passed through greater or more varied trial than David? Spiritual conflict, personal distress, family affliction persecutions from enemies, and difficulties of all sorts, were continually compassing him about; and yet through all he had one never-failing refuge, the *word* of his God. This *never* failed him, and so it was he could say from heart-felt experience of its power and faithfulness—"O how I love Thy law!" It is this experimental knowledge that will awaken love in our souls for the word, and love will beget medi-

tation. We *think* most of that we *love* most. "Meditation" in the word is that act of spiritual digestion by which our souls are nourished, and the food we receive becomes part of ourselves. The effect of meditation will be seen in a vigorous, healthy spiritual life.

March 19.

98. *Thou, through Thy commandments, hast made me wiser than mine enemies, for they are ever with me.*

How humble, and yet how confident is the Psalmist! He feels he has attained wisdom which has enabled him again and again to outwit his enemies. Yet he prides not *himself* upon this, but acknowledges all as coming direct from God through the means of the "commandments." "*Thou* hast made me wiser," &c. Wisdom which none of our adversaries shall be able to gainsay or resist, is the special privilege of the believer. How strikingly was it seen in the case of the Apostles! (See Acts iv. 13; vi. 10.) It is a thought full of comfort to the *timid* child of God, for he is often at a loss to know how to act, and what to do; and he feels he has neither strength nor wisdom to combat with the many enemies that beset his path. Let him, however, only take care that the "commandments" are

ever with him, and God Himself his teacher, and he will find he depends on One who giveth to him "liberally" of that which he needs.

March 29.

99. *I have more understanding than all my teachers: for Thy testimonies are my meditation.*

Much study of the word, and meditation in the testimonies, in simple dependence upon the teaching of the Spirit of God, is the sure road to true wisdom. St. Paul, writing to Timothy, reminds him, that from a child he has "known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make him wise unto salvation." St. John, too, writes—"Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." "Ye need not that any man teach you." This is not to lead us to undervalue means or "teachers," but to give them their right place. We are so apt to cling to helps, and perhaps peculiarly so to those teachers from whom we have learnt much. Thus it is that God often removes them from us, or makes them unable to meet our special case, so that we may be *driven* to draw our supplies of grace and wisdom more directly from the source of all wisdom—God Himself. It is one of the promises of the *covenant* to God's own children—they shall be "taught of the Lord."

April 5.

100. *I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Thy precepts.*

Obedience to the word will result in yet clearer revelations of light and wisdom. "If any man *will do His will*, he shall know of the *doctrine*." "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good *understanding* have all they that *do His commandments*." Daniel was a bright example of this, who so strictly "kept the precepts" of his God; and it is recorded of him and his three companions, that "in all matters of wisdom and understanding that the king enquired of them, he found them *ten times better* than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm." The words of Elihu are true: "I said, Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom. But there is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding. Great men are not always wise, neither do the aged understand judgment."—Job xxxii. 7–9.

April 8.

101. *I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I may keep Thy word.*

To be keepers of the word is a mark of discipleship. See Joh. xiv: "If a man love Me, he

will *keep* My words." To such is the promise made of close and holy fellowship with the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity: "My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him"—"an habitation of God through the Spirit." We can see, then, the importance of following the Psalmist's example, and, if we would *keep* the word, of *keeping back* our feet from every evil way. We cannot be keepers of the word, and doers of evil, for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? An inconsistent Christian can never make progress in the knowledge of God's word, for the slightest *indulged* sin will bring a cloud over the soul, interrupting communion, and dimming our perception of truth. The child of God therefore, who is really desirous honestly to "walk in the light," keeping the word as hid treasure, will be very watchful to avoid *every* evil way, making no compromise; avoiding, not only the plain, open road of sin, but all the little by-paths of evil that may lead him astray; and often will his prayer be—"Search me, O God, and know *my heart*, try me and *know* my *thoughts*, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

April 10.

102. *I have not departed from Thy judgments; for Thou hast taught me.*

This verse opens to us the spring of Christian perseverance. The tendency of our own evil heart is ever to sin, and we are surrounded by influences ever drawing us aside. But yet if in any measure we can say with the Psalmist—"I have not departed from Thy judgments," to this we owe it—"for Thou hast taught me." "By the *grace* of God I am what I am." Grace chooses, grace calls, grace begins the new life in the child of God, grace carries it on, grace finishes. None but those who are taught of God will persevere to the end, but to them the promise is secured by "*covenant*:" "*I will* put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them: and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." Will this view of God's grace engender a slothful and careless walk in us? Nay, rather, when *truly* realised, will it not of necessity *constrain* us to offer ourselves "a living sacrifice" to Him, "by whose grace we are saved?" "*Freely* ye have received, *freely* give." Satan often teaches from God's lesson-books, and they are his scholars who "turn the grace of our God into lasciviousness."

April 19.

103. *How sweet are Thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!*

"Taste and see" if the Psalmist's testimony of these "sweet words" be not true; for sweetness can only be ascertained by *tasting*. "Honey and the honeycomb" represent the acme of sweetness, but what is the picture to the reality —the shadow to the substance? When faint and weary in the ceaseless conflict with evil, how often does some "sweet" word from Jesus "enlighten our eyes" and revive our drooping spirits, just as the "dropping honey" enlightened the eyes of Jonathan after his long day's battle with the Philistines. The more habitually we feed upon the word the more we shall discover of its sweetness, and we need fear no excess here, for it alone can yield a sweetness which will *satisfy*, and of which we shall not weary. This can be said of no earthly sweet, therefore are Thy words "sweeter than honey."

April 24.

104. *Through Thy precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way.*

Surrounded as we are on all sides by false ways, and so many of them bearing a resemblance to truth, we need continually to have "the

eyes of our understanding enlightened" lest we turn aside. The believer dreads nothing more than a "false way," whether it be in doctrine or practice, for either will be sure to lead him into darkness and difficulty. But while the question, What is truth? may make itself heard again and again in our hearts, it will not long remain unanswered if "the precepts" are the subject of our prayerful study, for through them "we get understanding," being guided by the "Spirit of truth" into "all truth." No "false way" can remain hidden in the light of truth, and when discovered will be hated by the believer as leading him aside from Him who is "*the* Way and *the* Truth."

May 2.

105. *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.*

A lantern, to be of use to a traveller in a dark night, must be held so as to throw light on his "*path*," and then, though all around may be shrouded in darkness, he will see clearly each step he should take. Just in this way should we make use of the "word." It throws no light on speculative reasonings, or on the cavillings of intellect; but to the humble seeker for

guidance it sheds a bright and steady light on his path, guiding "his feet into the way of peace." The reason we so often miss its guiding light is our impatience to see to the end of the road before us, whereas our safety lies in always being assured of the *next step* we should take. Though our progress may often appear slow, and all around us may be thick darkness, still our "lamp" will never fail us, and as from time to time we stand still to review the past, and retrace the way we have been led, we shall find the promise has again and again been fulfilled to us—"I will bring the blind by a way that they know not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make *darkness light before them*, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them."—Isa. xlii. 16.

May 8.

106. *I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep Thy righteous judgments.*

This was no hastily uttered expression of the Psalmist, but the solemn, calm resolve of one who knew that the judgments of Him to whom he had sworn allegiance were "*righteous judgments.*" The Psalmist desired that his life as

well as his lips should attest the sincerity of his profession. There are many pretenders continually seeking to share dominion in the heart of the believer, and it is well for him often to call to remembrance—"*Thy* vows are upon me, O God." Being *redeemed*, he is bound by many solemn and sacred ties to "yield himself unto God," and to present his body a "living sacrifice" to his Redeemer. This stedfastness of purpose to keep the "righteous judgments" of the Lord, though it may (and probably will) have the effect of enraging the great enemy of our souls, yet will weaken his influence over us, for confidence is ever the secret of strength, and he will find us ready to meet his assaults, "strong in the *Lord* and in the power of *His* might."

May 10.

107. *I am afflicted very much: quicken me, O Lord, according unto Thy word.*

To the inexperienced the use of the pruning knife will often appear to tend rather to destruction than to life, but he who holds the knife understands his work, and knows that the very branch which has been cut the deepest, will be the one most productive of life and fruit. So is

it with the dealings of the great Husbandman. He may afflict his children "very much," but it is in order to awaken in their hearts the cry, "Quicken me," that so He may be glorified by their yet greater fruitfulness. It is a thought of comfort that the longing for more spiritual life in the heart of a child of God is a longing imparted by Him who longs for it for him, and who, having awakened in his heart the prayer "Quicken me," will, "according to His word," fulfil that petition. It is a sweet word of promise,—"I am come that they might have life, and have it *more abundantly*."

May 14.

109. *My soul is continually in my hand: yet do I not forget Thy law.*

How many are the circumstances of life in which with the Psalmist some can say—"My soul is continually in my hand?" Happy are those who can add—"Yet do I not forget Thy law." The soldier in times of warfare puts his life in his hand, and knows not when it may be taken. So the martyrs in days of persecution. So also is it the case with many a weary sufferer laid, perhaps for years, upon a bed of sickness. Very sad is the case of those who stand con-

tinually upon the brink of the grave, with all things earthly slipping from their grasp, and yet who have no bright hope for the future. How great the contrast between these, and those who, like the Psalmist, have found in "the law" treasure of more value than "thousands of gold and silver." Such are the happy possessors of "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away," and which they know that they shall live for ever to enjoy.

May 26.

110. *The wicked have laid a snare for me; yet I erred not from Thy precepts.*

Discouraged Christian! is the former part of this verse more true of your soul than the latter? Yet be not cast down. It is true the wicked one has laid many a secret, subtle snare in your path; and to cause you to "err from the precepts" and lead you astray is his one aim and ambition. But you have a sure word of promise on which to rest. The Lord says of the "sighing of the needy"—"I will *set him in safety* from him that would ensnare him."—Ps. xii. 5 (margin). Only let your eyes be "ever unto the Lord," and "He shall pluck your feet out of the net," disentangling all the knots of puzzled

questions that tie and fetter you, and cutting asunder again the corn of some besetting sin which threatens to hold you fast. He will lift you up, and set you on high, even in the secret of His pavilion. There, hidden in Jesus, the language of your heart and lips will be—"*Blessed be God.*" "Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers; the snare is broken, and we are escaped." So shall you yet "not err from the precepts."

May 31.

111. *Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever; for they are the rejoicing of my heart.*

Since the Psalmist wrote these words, how greatly has the heritage of the testimonies increased in size and value: and may not we, as possessors of the whole revealed will of God, exclaim—"The lines are fallen unto me in pleasan places, yea, I have a goodly heritage." Do we desire the testimonies to become more and more the "very joy of our heart?" We must be careful to make diligent use of them, for in this way alone is their value learnt. Are we in perplexity? Here we may seek counsel. Are we sad? Here we may find comfort. Are we in darkness? Here is a light and a lamp. Are we

distressed by enemies? Here is a hiding-place and refuge. Are we weak? Here we may find strength. Earth's fairest heritage can yield at the best but a few years of passing enjoyment: that contained in the testimonies endureth "for ever."

June 9.

112. *I have inclined mine heart to perform Thy statutes alway, even unto the end.*

Privilege always involves duty. The Psalmist, ejoicing in the enjoyment of his "heritage" was constrained the more to feel his obligation to keep the statutes. It was the constraint of love, and "inclining the heart" is always the first step towards action; for where the affections are engaged in the Lord's service the whole will is brought into subjection, and the desire grows increasingly to "perform the statutes," not merely now and then, but "alway, even unto the end." At "the end" we shall enter into actual possession of the "inheritance," of which we have now but the earnest. It is well for the believer to have his eye continually fixed upon this point, as a stimulus to fresh exertion in his daily conflict against the world, the flesh, and the devil. (See Phil. iii. 20, 21, with Phil. iv. 1,

where the force of the little word "so" is only seen when taken in connection with the end of the previous chapter.)

June 16.

113. *I hate vain thoughts, but Thy law do I love.*

Some of God's children are peculiarly tried with evil thoughts: at most holy seasons, in most solemn moments, they are yet not free from the intrusion of some "vain thought," which they "*hate.*" This may often be traced to the fact that in former years "vain thoughts" had been harboured, and not hated; and now, in league with the evil one, they strive hard still to usurp their lost dominion in the heart of the believer. The trial is one of peculiar bitterness, and often causes the child of God much conflict and distress of mind. But the Psalmist points us to the best remedy when he says—"Thy law do I love." Two things cannot occupy the same space at the same moment. The more we love the law the more will it become our "meditation" day and night, and then, though "vain thoughts" may rise and struggle within us, they will find no room where they may "lodge."

June 20.

114. *Thou art my hiding-place and my shield: I hope in Thy word.*

Very precious in this verse is the double emblem of security, the "hiding-place" and the "shield;" the shield for the day of battle, the hiding-place for the day of weariness and weakness; both times so well known in the life of the believer. In times of conflict, how great our strength, when faith realises "The LORD God is our shield;" and the grateful song of victory goes up from our heart and lips—"*More* than conquerors *through Him* that loved us." But sweet as it is thus to be shielded from the assaults of the enemy, it is sweeter still to be hidden altogether from his reach. Jesus is our "hiding-place," and when, weak and weary, we have no strength left for conflict, He hears the whispered trust—"I hope in Thy word;" and He hides the weary one in the secret of His presence. There, hidden in Jesus, how safe are we! In Him sin and self are lost sight of, and no foe can touch or hurt us. Oh! that we were more content to "*abide*" always in our "*hiding-place!*"

June 23, 1865.

